The Fitness Connection

The Newsletter of the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness

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Feeling Down?

Numerous studies have shown that short bouts of exercise can help you feel better emotionally, whether you have had a bad day or suffer from mild depression. The emotional benefit seems to be specific to the individual, based on age, physical condition, and training level, as well as the length of time and type of exercise performed. There are many different theories as to why exercise helps improve mood. Some researchers think that it might be more associated with group interaction and the meeting of new people that takes place when an individual joins a gym and begins exercising. Others believe that the elevated mood comes from the release of endorphins. Endorphins are morphine-like substrates naturally produced by the body during and after aerobic exercise which cause the individual to have feelings of euphoria. This release of endorphins is commonly called "the runner's high." Other chemicals released by the body during exercise, such as serotonin and norephinephrine, might also contribute to this euphoric state.

Another theory on how exercise improves mood is that during exercise, your body temperature is elevated, which allows for the relaxation of your muscles. This creates a calming experience. This is the same calming experience that one feels after taking a long bath or spending the day at the spa. On the other hand, some researchers feel that your mind is tranquilized through the repetitive action of aerobic exercise. During swimming, running, cycling, and similar exercises, your muscles are repeating the same action over and over, and this may have a calming effect on the brain. Whether the improved mood is based on one theory or a combination of theories remains unknown, but the research is far from over. However, you don't have to wait for the results! Get out there and start exercising yourself into a better mood!

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Voit, Sophia Glezos. Exercise Can Chase the Blues, Studies Show. Retrieved September 9, 2002 from www.nih.gov.

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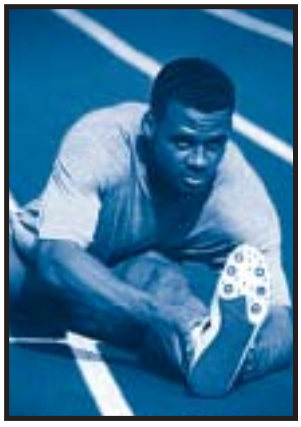
How Important is Stretching?

Don't think you have enough time to stretch and exercise? Don't think stretching is really that important? Are you too tired to stretch? More than likely you have had these thoughts or similar ones at some point in time.

Stretching is a key component of health and fitness. Stretching is important for many reasons. First, stretching can help reduce muscle soreness that occurs due to overworking your muscles during exercise. Through stretching, you are able to release some metabolic byproducts, such as lactic acid, that accumulate in your muscles with exercise. The release of these byproducts promotes recovery. Second, stretching can increase your range of motion. By increasing your range of motion, you decrease your chances of sustaining an injury, and at the same time you increase your athletic performance.

Stretching can also be performed without exercise. As you grow older, your flexibility decreases, which can cause your body to become tight and stiff. Stretching can combat this stiffness by loosening up the joints and increasing flexibility. It is crucial to maintain or even improve flexibility as you grow older. As your flexibility decreases, so might your quality of life. You may be unable to perform everyday tasks with ease. A maintained or increased flexibility also decreases your chances of sustaining an age-related injury, such as falling, by giving your muscles and joints more freedom of movement. Stretching helps keep the joints flexible by lengthening the surrounding muscles.



Flexibility is joint- and movement-specific; therefore, it is key to stretch each joint through the entire range of motion on a regular basis. Flexibility is the easiest area of fitness to improve and you can see and feel the results the first week!

Important Considerations:

- Initially hold stretches for 20-30 seconds, gradually working toward 30-60 seconds.
- Do not bounce; instead, hold the stretch nice and easy.
- Do not hold your breath. Stretching should be relaxing.
- Stop if you feel pain. Stretching should never hurt.

Stretching before and after Exercise

Warm-up:

- The warm-up is crucial in preparing the body for exercise. The warm-up should include a general component that loosens the entire body through stretching and then a sport-specific component that prepares you for a particular activity.
- Should last 10-15 minutes.

Cool-down:

- Gradually decrease your exercise intensity.
- Perform stretches similar to those in the general component of the warm-up.
- Should last 5-10 minutes.

References:

The Importance of Stretching. Retrieved September 9, 2002 from www.waitrose.com.

The Importance of Stretching. Retrieved September 9, 2002 from www.cifstate.org.

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Can McDonalds Make A Difference?

Saturated fat is found naturally in meats, dairy products, and tropical oils like coconut and palm kernel. Most trans fatty acids are created when liquid oil is turned into a more solid fat, such as shortening and margarine. Saturated fat raises LDL cholesterol, the "bad" cholesterol, and HDL, the "good" cholesterol. However, the benefit of the increased HDL from consumption of saturated fat still doesn't offset the negative effects of the increased LDL. Trans fat only raises LDL cholesterol. Recent research indicates that trans fatty acids are even worse for the heart than saturated fats.

On September 3, 2002, McDonald's USA announced in a press release that they are working to significantly reduce trans fatty acids in their french fries through the use of an improved cooking oil. The new oil that McDonald's will be using is supposed to reduce the trans fatty acids by 48%, from 3.4 grams to 1.8 grams per serving. Saturated fat will also be reduced with the use of this new cooking oil. Saturated fat will decrease by 16%, from 2.3 grams to 1.9 grams per serving. By changing the cooking process, the taste of McDonald's famous french fries may be altered. But, company executives are confident that the majority of customers won't even taste the difference. The transition to the improved cooking oil will take place between October 2002 and February 2003 in the United States. A McDonald's executive announced that eventually there will be a worldwide integration of the new cooking oil, and the french fries aren't going to be the only menu item made in the new oil. In the future, menu items such as chicken nuggets, filet-o-fish, hash browns and the crispy chicken sandwich will be prepared in the new oil, as well.

Many nutritionists and health officials applaud McDonald's step in a healthier direction. They feel that Wendy's, Burger King, and other fast food restaurants will soon begin to make the change to healthier fats. However, the introduction of this new cooking oil will not alter the amount of calories in McDonald's french fries (see chart). So, we must continue to be careful in our thinking about what is healthy. Just because it is healthier than before doesn't necessarily mean that it is good for you now! The bottom line remains: limit your intake of both saturated and trans fats for better health.

Serving Size	Calories
Small	210
Medium	450
Large	540
Super Size	610

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Horovitz, Bruce. McDonald's Gambles, Cuts "trans fat" in French Fries. September 3, 2002, USA Today.

September 3, 2002. McDonald's USA Press Release. Retrieved September 9, 2002 from http://www.mcdonalds.com.

South Carolina Governor's Council on Physical Fitness

"Promoting health and the well-being of South Carolinians of all ages by increasing the level of physical activity."

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Josey H. Templeton, Ed.D.

Acting Executive Director
Teresa E. Hill, MS, RD

Editor
Katie Anderton

WOW! Take a Look at this Council Member!

Dennis M. Shepard, MAT, CHES, has served on the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness as the Vice Chair since 2000. Mr. Shepard is the Deputy Director of the University of South Carolina's Prevention Research Center. He is also a Lecturer in the Department of Health Administration for the Arnold School of Public Health (University of South Carolina). He has held these positions since 1999.

He received an Associate of Science degree in Health and Physical Education from the University of South Carolina, Aiken; a Bachelor of Science degree in Health and Physical Education; and a Masters of Arts in Teaching Health Education from the University of South Carolina, Columbia. Mr. Shepard is the author of many publications associated with public health and has also given numerous presentations in this area.

Mr. Shepard holds memberships in or is associated with many organizations that include: the South Carolina Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance; the Association of State and Territorial Chronic Disease Program Directors Board; the SC Turning Point Implementation Oversight Committee; the Tri-State Stroke Network Board; and the Palmetto Trail Advisory Board.

This year, the South Carolina Public Health Association presented Mr. Shepard with the James A. Hayne Award. The award is given to a member who has accomplished praiseworthy achievements in the public health arena over the years. The James A. Hayne award recognizes "efforts above and beyond the usual requirements, efforts that have contributed directly to community health." Congratulations, Mr. Shepard, and thanks for being an outstanding member of the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness!

Check out the current Council Members!

Robert B. Beavers, Ph.D.
Selwyn Blake
Lauren Burns
Ophie Casey
Tom Chinn
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Lynn Hammond
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